

Self Regulation

What is Self regulation?

Self-regulation is the ability to understand and manage your behaviour and your reactions to feelings and things happening around you. It includes being able to:

- 🧩 Regulate reactions to emotions like frustration or excitement
- 🧩 Calm down after something exciting or upsetting
- 🧩 Focus on a task
- 🧩 Refocus attention on a new task
- 🧩 Control impulses
- 🧩 Learn behaviour that helps you get along with other people.

This resource will look at ways we can all support children to stay regulated under three different categories:

1. The Value of Routines
2. Sensory Motor Circuit
3. Creating a Cosy Corner/ Area

What can I do to help a child self-regulate?

1. Provide structure and order.

Structure the environment to make self-regulation manageable, providing a buffer against environmental stressors. This means creating an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for children to explore and learn at their level of development without risk to their wellbeing. Two ideas that are discussed in this booklet are:

- a. Creating a daily routine schedule and
- b. Creating a safe cosy corner/area

2. Teach self-regulation skills through modelling, instruction and opportunities for practice.

Often times during the day, you might notice a child is unable to concentrate, lethargic or sleepy, distracted, emotional or overwhelmed, it might be a sign that they need a movement break. Why? Exercise helps our brain to:

- ✚ maintain focus
- ✚ stretch our muscles
- ✚ reduce stress and the feeling of being overwhelmed
- ✚ re-set our posture
- ✚ boost memory

This booklet will provide you with some ideas for simple exercises to actively teach an effective way to help children to self-regulate their own sensory needs throughout the day.

The Value of Routines

The use of daily routines can provide structure and predictability to all. Routines help everyone know who should do what, when, in what order and how often.

Creating a visual timetable together is a nice way to ensure everyone is aware of the plan for the day, you can use pictures, drawings, writing the words or all of the above.



Sensory Motor Circuit

Sensory Motor Circuit (Horwood, 2008) is a simple and effective way to help children to self-regulate their own sensory needs throughout the day. This supports better concentration, fewer disruptions and improved education outcomes for all. It enables children to reach the level of alertness needed to concentrate.

This booklet will help you to create an individual sensory circuit. The order of the circuit is extremely important:

1. Alerting section
2. Organising section
3. Calming section.

The circuit ends on calming activities as it's best practise for all children to end every session in a calm and alert state. Every child is different so try a few calming exercises to see what ones work best.

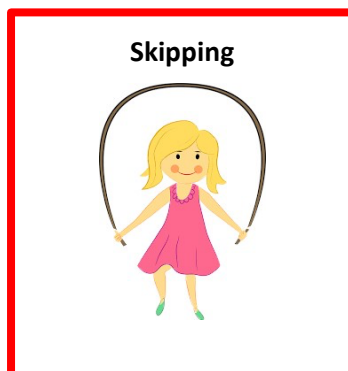
USEFUL TIP

It is useful to play music during the circuit as it can mark the beginning and the end of the circuit. The music could vary from fast paced during the alerting activities and soothing during the calming exercises.

Alerting activities:

The aim is to provide vestibular stimulation (providing the brain with sensory information every time the position of the head moves in relation to gravity) within a controlled environment. This prepares the brain for learning.

Alerting activities include skipping, running and jumping jacks. Please see the link below for more ideas of alerting activities.



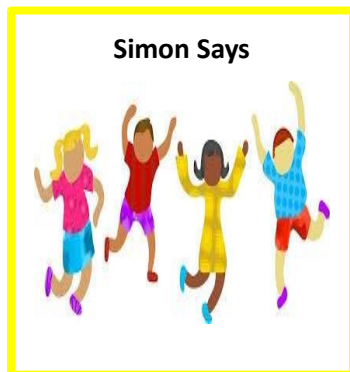
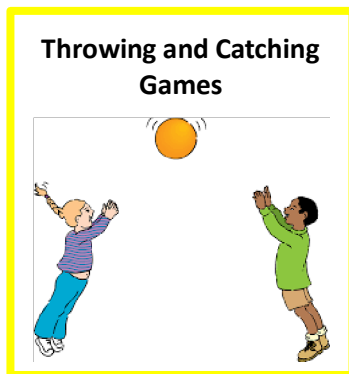
For more alerting activities please see:

<https://www.gonoodle.com/>

Organising activities:

This includes activities that require the child to organise their body, plan their approach and do more than one thing at a time in a set sequential order. These are skills that may increase a child's focus, attention span and performance.

Organising activities include climbing, balancing, and throwing. Please see the link below for more ideas of organising activities.

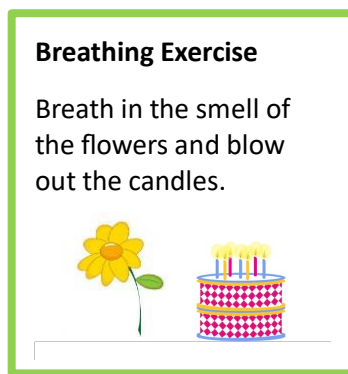
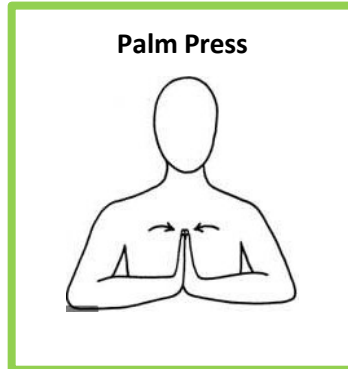
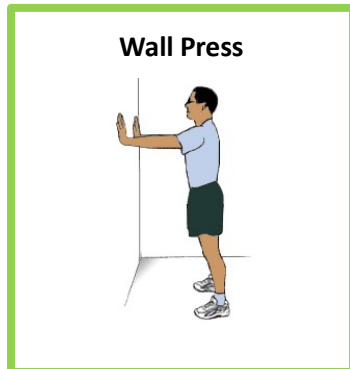


For more organising activities please see:
<https://activeforlife.com/resource-intro/>

Calming activities:

The aim is to provide proprioceptive input which is sensations from joints, muscles and connective tissues that underlie body awareness. These calming activities provide input to ensure that as the children finish, they are calm and ready for the task ahead.

Calming activities include: press-ups, crawling exercises or a big hug. Please refer to the link below for more ideas of calming activities.



For more calming activities please see:

<https://www.cosmickids.com/category/watch/>

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/category/free-resources/>

Creating a Cosy Corner/Area

Creating a Cosy Corner is a great way to ensure that children have somewhere to go when they need to have some quiet time to themselves. If a child is upset or simply overwhelmed they may not yet have the skills to regulate emotions on their own. Some children like to be soothed by an adult with some hugs or cuddles and others may prefer to go off to soothe themselves. Self-soothing is a great skill for young children to learn.

You can make your cosy area fit, working with whatever space you have available. However use your imagination (and the children's)

and together create your own unique cosy area which is suitable for your class. Your cosy corner can incorporate all of the senses so think about using different texture such as cosy blankets, slime and leaves, think about things that you can look at, listen to, taste or smell. Be creative with what you put in the cosy corner and be sure to include a few of the class's favourite things. Have a look at a few examples below to see how this could look.



References

Le Roux, T. (2020) *Sensory Integration Activities*.
<https://www.ot-mom-learningactivities.com/sensory-integration-activities.html> (US)

Little, E. (2019, July 7) *Self-Regulation in Young Children*.
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Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust. (2018, April) *Sensory Motor Circuits- A sensory Motor Skills Programme for Children*.
<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/docs/default-source/leaflets---sensory-strategy-leaflets---april2015/0218---sensory-circuits---info-for-teachers--april-2018.pdf?sfvrsn=8>